**Comparison of Sensory Integration & Sensory Integration Dysfunction**

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|  | **Typical** | **Atypical**  (Sensory Integration Dysfunction) |
| What | The ability to absorb the information from the environment and from the body. Then to take this sound, touch, vision, balance, or movement, and organize it into information to use in daily life. | Inefficient, unusual, or incorrect processing of basic sensory information. Consequently this creates stress in learning and growing, which results in difficult social and cultural interactions. |
| Where | In the central nervous system, as a balanced process that involves screening out the information that is not important and acting on the information that is important. Most of this process is automatic, not at a cognitive level. | In the central nervous system, but with difficulty screening out unimportant elements (or noise) from the environment. As a result, interaction with the basic environment can be stressful. The more forms of input, the higher the difficulty and frustration. |
| Why | Typical sensory integration is important on various levels:   * for survival * for making sense of the world * for interacting with the environment * for interacting with other people   All require effective processing. | Inefficient central nervous system processing creates problems with appropriate interactions with internal and external environments. This results in dysfunctional behavior and social and survival difficulties. |
| How | The process happens automatically as the person takes in sensations from skin, eyes, nose, tongue, inner ear, muscles and joints. | The central nervous system is unable to process sensory information efficiently or appropriately. There may be over-or-under responsiveness to normal stimulus. |
| When | Begins before birth and continues developing throughout childhood, with most functions established by adolescence. In normal development, with a nurturing environment, sensory integration happens naturally, without effort. | Begins before birth and continues throughout childhood and adolescence. Without intervention providing the appropriate enriched therapeutic sensory experiences, integration is stressful and inefficient. |

*Adapted from: Answers to Questions Teachers Ask About Sensory Integration*